

It's been nearly 20 years since Ronald Reagan left the presidency. Yet, even people who don't remember his presidency (or his governorship in California) as I do, have positive views of his legacy. Yes, he lowered taxes and ended the Cold War. But we remember him for even more than that. He stood un...

It's been nearly 20 years since Ronald Reagan left the presidency. Yet, even people who don't remember his presidency (or his governorship in California) as I do, have positive views of his legacy. Yes, he lowered taxes and ended the Cold War. But we remember him for even more than that. He stood unwavering by his principles, his personal integrity was never in question and he had that immutable optimism.

Today, Congress has a record-low approval rating of 11 percent. Republicans lost the majority in part because they spent too much, had ethical lapses and did not deliver on illegal immigration and other issues. The people put Democrats in charge, but those Democrats have disappointed even more than Republicans.

Americans are crying out for leadership with principle, integrity and courage. They want to believe again in an optimistic vision for America's future.

Reagan 21 is the project of a group of about 20 senators and representatives to provide that fresh, bold leadership. I, along with Republican Sens. Tom Coburn of Oklahoma and Jim DeMint of South Carolina and Republican Reps. John Shadegg of Arizona, Jeb Hensarling of Texas, Paul Ryan of Wisconsin and Thomas Price of Georgia, founded Reagan 21 to give people something to believe in again.

Why name it Reagan 21? We want to apply the enduring principles, integrity and optimism of Ronald Reagan to 21st-century challenges and opportunities.

We have taken strong, principled positions on a number of issues. For example, we believe that the earmark process should be eliminated. Mr. Coburn has said that earmarks are the "gateway drug to overspending." They are. But they are also the gateway drug to corruption in Congress,

as we have seen with recent indictments and convictions. And we are likely to see more such indictments in the future. To lead by example, all members of Reagan 21 have agreed to request no new earmarks. The earmark process is the tool used by the spenders in both parties to accomplish their goals of using your money to create their power. And we have to stop them.

But we have many more thoughts on how to move America toward more freedom rather than the near-socialist vision of many congressional Democrats:

- The entitlements of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid will eat up 100 percent of the taxes you pay within 30 years. They are on an unsustainable path. To save them, we must reform them by allowing more individual control and involvement. Leaving them alone will lead to their demise.
- English should be the official language of this country. And we should allow local law enforcement officers to help enforce our immigration laws. Add a system of universal employment verification and we can enforce our immigration laws while welcoming legal immigrants and stopping those who violate those laws.
- We share a goal for all Americans to have health care coverage. But socialized medicine will only amplify the inefficiencies and care lapses of the current system. Health care should be patient-centered and not government-centered in the future. You should be able to control your own decisions about your health care and not be taxed by government to do it.
- Federal intrusions into local education, like No Child Left Behind, are not productive or helpful. We do not support federal schools, to which the collectivist crowd is moving. Education is best served by being closer to parents and kids and farther away from Washington control.
- We should move toward a fairer, flatter tax system based on consumption. We should limit the

annual growth in federal spending to the growth rate in the economy so that the government does not inexorably take more and more of your paycheck.

Reagan 21 is just beginning. There is lots more to do, more to say and more to propose. You will hear about our progress in the months and years ahead.

None of us is Ronald Reagan. No one will be again. But we can use his example to inspire a new generation of conservatives to lead America to an even greater "city on the hill" tomorrow.